By entering into real nature, wisdom swiftly arises.
—*The Crest Jewel of Wisdom*

THEOSOPHY

VOLUME 53 APRIL, 1965 NUMBER 6

THE WORK OF THE SOUL

THE moving inspiration of *The Secret Doctrine* is found most of all in the way in which its writer, H. P. Blavatsky, so easily rises free of the weight of scholarly apparatus, abandoning argument with scientists and leaving behind the confinements of theological symbolism, to speak directly to the minds of her readers. In no other work can one encounter this exhilarating combination of factual detail with the sweeping surety of an intelligence that cannot possibly repeat anything at second hand!

In the last analysis, it is the intuition of the inquirer upon which an understanding of this book depends; and yet, it cannot be said that there is any by-passing of the more pedestrian methods of understanding. *The Secret Doctrine* pays full respect to the spirit of scientific inquiry, asking only that it be honestly applied to the material which is presented. For then, as H.P.B. says, Metaphysics and Spiritual Psychology will assert their authority, obliging men of science to recognize long-denied realities. As she puts it:

> They will be driven out of their position not by spiritual, theosophical, or any other physical or even mental phenomena, but simply by the enormous *gaps* and *chasms* that open daily and will still be opening before them, as one discovery follows the other, until they are finally knocked off their feet by the ninth wave of simple common sense. (I, 620.)

Is this an unwarranted optimism? It might be so regarded, if we had nothing but the occasional break-throughs of a few philosophizing physicists and physiologists from which to obtain supporting

evidence. But what study of the *S.D.* discloses is that this book heralds, depends upon, and in a sense embodies a rising current of psycho-spiritual evolution. Now going on, we are instructed, are processes of awakening which are no more than natural expressions of evolutionary progress in this cycle. While we hardly have the right, in the present moment, to offer more than the loosest of generalizations concerning evidences of this change, even skeptics will acknowledge that a new "center of gravity" in human affairs is slowly making its attraction felt. For all the "materialism" of the times and the furious pursuit of and attachment to "things," there are distinct innovations in the attitudes of people toward *themselves*. The idea of psychological identity is slowly replacing our racial and national conceptions and feelings. What need to insist that a man is not his "body" when this is beginning to be felt by so many, from the inside?

There is of course an enormous difference between the Upanishadic idea of the Self and the dawning psychic perceptions which are giving both literature and philosophy so different a tone. The slow influx of new ideas must seem no more than a vague shadowing of the timeless axioms of the Wisdom Religion; and yet, a kind of spiritual "excitement" cannot help but be felt as the parallels grow more manifest.

It is as though there are men abroad in the land, today, who "know who they are," and therefore exhibit mastery and self-confidence in the work that they have to do. It is not that they "know" in doctrinal terms, or that some kind of "agreement" about the truth could be extracted from them. Rather, they seem to possess just that degree of self-knowledge needed to support the karmic focus of their lives in this cycle. Men of this sort are an immeasurable inspiration to others, by reason of the uncomplicated way in which they carry on pioneering undertakings.

But with these various and encouraging developments at hand, it is equally apparent that the promise of the cycle is not to be realized without extraordinary effort. It might be said that the awakenings are not in themselves any sort of "achievement," but represent rather the beginnings of an awareness of the heroic potentialities in human beings. There is no simple "mutation" into the man of tomorrow, but a kind of inner rebirth, a halting but nonetheless real declaration of man's Promethean identity. And with this, inevitably, comes also the pervading presence of Promethean pain.

It is in the light of such subjective realizations that certain autobiographical passages of Everyman in *The Secret Doctrine* take on profound and saving meaning. As for example the following:

> There is one eternal Law in nature, one that always tends to adjust contraries and to produce final harmony. It is owing to this law of spiritual development superseding the physical and purely intellectual, that mankind will become freed from its false gods, and find itself finally—*SELF-REDEEMED*.
>
> In its final revelation, the old myth of Prometheus—his *proto-* and *anti*-types being found in every ancient theogony—stands in each of them at the very origin of physical evil, because at the threshold of human physical life. KRONOS is "Time," whose first law is that the order of the successive and harmonious phases in the process of evolution during cyclic development should be strictly preserved—under the severe penalty of abnormal growth with all its ensuing results. It was not in the programme of natural development that man—higher animal though he may be—should become at once—intellectually, spiritually, and psychically—the demi-god he is on earth, while his physical frame remains weaker and more helpless and ephemeral than that of almost any huge mammal. The contrast is too grotesque and violent; the tabernacle much too unworthy of its indwelling god. The gift of Prometheus thus became a CURSE—though *foreknown* and *foreseen* by the HOST personified by that personage, as his name well shows. It is in this that rests, at one and the same time, its sin and its redemption. For the Host that incarnated in a portion of humanity, though led to it by Karma or *Nemesis,* preferred free-will to passive slavery, intellectual self-conscious pain and even torture—"while myriad time shall flow"—to inane, imbecile, instinctual beatitude. Knowing such an incarnation was premature and not in the programme of nature, the heavenly host, "Prometheus," still sacrificed itself to benefit thereby, at least, one portion of mankind. But while saving man from mental darkness, they inflicted upon him the tortures of the self-consciousness of his responsibility—the result of his free will—besides every ill to which mortal man and flesh are heir to. This torture Prometheus accepted for himself, since the Host became henceforward blended with the tabernacle prepared for them, which was still unachieved at that period of formation.
>
> Spiritual evolution being incapable of keeping pace with the physical, once its homogeneity was broken by the admixture, the gift thus became the chief cause, if not the sole origin of *Evil.* (II, 420-21.)

In the course of human life, every individual has opportunity to learn the lesson of the impersonality that comes from knowing how to do one's work. The blessedness of losing oneself in what he has

to do is the salvation of many. But there is a higher impersonality which can be born from growing understanding of the *spiritual* work of the immortal soul. It is this that we have opportunity to learn from *The Secret Doctrine*. Only with that attitude of mind can the Promethean labors be made complete.

THE HERO TASK

The great world religions, as at present understood, have become associated with causes of the factions, as instruments of propaganda and self-congratulation. (Even Buddhism has lately suffered this degradation, in reaction to the lesson of the West.) The universal triumph of the secular state has thrown all religious organizations into such a definitely secondary, and finally ineffectual, position that religious pantomime is hardly more today than a sanctimonious exercise for Sunday morning, whereas business ethics and patriotism stand for the remainder of the week. Such a monkey-holiness is not what the functioning world requires; rather, a transmutation of the whole social order is necessary so that through every detail and act of secular life the vitalizing image of the universal god-man who is actually immanent and effective in all of us may be somehow made known to consciousness.

And this is not a work that consciousness itself can achieve. Consciousness can no more invent, or even predict, an effective symbol than foretell or control tonight's dream. The whole thing is being worked out on another level, through what is bound to be a long and very frightening process. But there is one thing we may know, namely, that it is necessary for men to understand, and be able to see that through various symbols the same redemption is revealed. "Truth is one," we read in the Vedas; "the sages call it by many names." A single song is being inflected through all the colorations of the human choir. General propaganda for one or another of the local solutions, therefore, is superfluous—or much rather, a menace. The way to become human is to learn to recognize the lineaments of God in all of the wonderful modulations of the face of man.

With this we come to the final hint of what the specific orientation of the modern hero-task must be, and discover the real cause for the disintegration of all our inherited religious formulae.

—JOSEPH CAMPBELL

PREDESTINATION

Grieve not, O son of Pandu, for thou art born with the divine destiny. —*The Bhagavad-Gita*

I

THE French theologian and reformer of the early sixteenth century, John Calvin, known throughout Christendom as one of the principal leaders of the Reformation, was beyond doubt one of the most influential doctrinists in the whole of Protestantism. The "Five Points of Calvinism," chief of which is the doctrine of Election or Predestination, have entered into and given color to almost every faction of Christianity—pre-eminently the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist denominations. It is true there have been changes, divisions, and modifications in all these cults—the Baptists alone experiencing as many as seventeen major splits since the time of Roger Williams—with little left, in some instances, of Calvin's extreme views. Yet his doctrines still prevail in one or another form, and in a few of the sects—as with some groups of Predestinarian Baptists—the original Calvinistic influence appears to be as strong as ever. Predestination, however, is not unique with Judaism and Christianity, nor with the Bible. It was taught, in a more philosophical form, by both Brahmanism and Buddhism, as well as by some of the early Gnostics. Nor was Calvin the first among the Christians to elaborate the doctrine into a basic article of faith, to be adopted later by many European and American churches. St. Augustine, sometimes called the "Doctor of All the Churches," whom both Calvin and Luther quoted as authority for their special views on the subject, is widely known for his teaching on Predestination, as well as for his attempt to reconcile the doctrines of the Fall, Grace, and Free-Will. The concepts of Augustine and Calvin, as expressed in their own words, are as follows:

> God, by His arbitrary will, has selected beforehand certain persons, without regard to foreseen faith or good actions, and has irretrievably ordained to bestow upon them eternal happiness; while He has condemned others in the same way to eternal reprobation. (St. Augustine.)

> The human race, corrupted radically in the fall with Adam, has upon it the guilt and impotence of original sin; its redemption can be achieved only through an incarnation and a propitiation; of this redemption only electing grace can make the soul a participant; and such grace, once given, is never lost; this election can come only from God, and it includes only a part of the race, the rest being left to perdition; election and perdition are both predestined in the Divine plan; that plan is a decree, and this decree is eternal and unchangeable . . . justification is by faith alone, and faith is the gift of God. (John Calvin.)

Whether the views expressed above on Original Sin, Election, and Predestination are true or false, no one will deny, perhaps, that never before in the annals of human history has the status of Man, the crown of all creation, been reduced to so low a position! Why, on this basis, should any man aspire, if in the great summation, neither his destiny nor that of his fellows can be altered in a lasting sense by what he does? Of what value is choice or the power of discrimination? Why should human beings strive to prevent wars or improve the living conditions of the poor? The answer usually given to these questions is that, while it is true one's eternal salvation or damnation cannot be altered by what one does, his present sojourn on earth nevertheless can be and is. Even the "Elect," it is held, although blessed with the inestimable satisfaction of being able to look forward to eternal bliss in the hereafter, may nevertheless, because of good or evil act, be both rewarded and punished here on earth. The "damned," too, let us hope, if such are capable of any good, will likewise be rewarded with his spoonful of joy—a taste of bliss he had best not allow himself to relish, however, lest his future fate of "fire and brimstone" seem all the more painful by comparison! Of what value, on the basis of this teaching, is life here on earth? Do the sixty or seventy-odd years of trial and hardship in the body have no meaning in relationship to the greater goal? Is present experience, compounded largely of striving, sacrifice, and sorrow, an unnecessary page in the Book of Life—a page with much writing, but no meaning?

The basic assumption upon which the Christian concept of Election, or Predestination, is built, the supporting dogma that distinguishes it from the idea as taught in other religions and at the same time makes it so repugnant in the eyes of many people, is the dogma of Original Sin, or the *total depravity of man.* It is the belief of the Theosophist that this dogma is invalid, that it is a mis-interpretation

of Bible teaching, that it is demoralizing in its effects upon young and old alike, and that it ought to be re-examined.

Before discussing at length the subject of Predestination, let us question, therefore, this dogma of Original Sin.

The "Fall" of Adam, upon which the dogma rests, was held by Philo Judaeus to be symbolical, and Origen regarded it as an *allegory*. Even Peter, in his great reverence for Adam, could never bring himself to admit that the father of the human race had sinned and was accursed. "For, as I am persuaded, neither was Adam a transgressor, who was fashioned by the hand of God." (Clementine Homilies, II, lii.) Might it be that in the story of Adam and Eve, and in that of the "Fall," a deep mystery lies concealed, the true meaning of which is to be unveiled through use of symbology? Is it possible that W. T. Stace, Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University, was right when he said that "all religious language must be taken as symbolical, and not as literal"? He further contends: "The moment you take your religious doctrine as literal, you find that it results in contradictions. . . . The common defense put up by religious men has always consisted in vainly trying to explain the contradictions away, which cannot be done." Dr. Paul Tillich, formerly of the Harvard School of Divinity, says the same; and thinks that the "ineffectual position" of present-day religion is due to the fact that it "defended great symbols, not as symbols, but as literal stories." And in *Fordham Magazine* (Winter 1960) the Rev. Robt. W. Gleason, Professor of Theology at Fordham University, in an article titled "New Trends in Scriptural Interpretation," says that "the first eleven chapters of Genesis must be called symbolic history, a popular account of the beginning of the human race." And does not even St. Paul, as in the narrative of Abraham's two sons (Gal. 4:24) recommend the use of symbology?

> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory.

The Apostle goes on to explain that if we interpret such things literally, the true and deeper meaning is lost. Much of Bible doctrine, according to Theosophy, and especially the first few chapters of Genesis, is cast in symbols—the seven "Days" of creation, for example, with the Sun brought forth only on the *fourth* day. Taken literally, the first three days of this episode of creation become an

enigma in the view of every sincere student of the Bible, for how could there be "days," as we know days, before the Sun existed? Read symbolically, however, as representing seven *great* "Days," or periods of evolution, this first chapter of Genesis becomes a magnificent scientific account of the birth of our earth on the principle of Emanation, or unfoldment. "The doctrine of Emanation," said H. P. Blavatsky, "was at one time universal. It was taught by the Alexandrian as well as by the Indian philosophers, by the Egyptian, the Chaldean and Hellenic Hierophants, and also by the Hebrews (in their Kabala, and even in *Genesis*)." (*Theosophical Glossary,* p. 113.) Emanation, in one sense, is the opposite of Evolution, for whereas the evolutionists teach a materialistic, physical unfoldment rooted in matter, the emanationists held that "all life is from a spiritual potency above the whole." Under the doctrine of Emanation, everything first exists on the plane of homogeneity, or spirituality, as when the "earth was without form, and void." By gradual unfoldment or condensation, it proceeds downward to "light" (or fire) on the first day, to "firmament" (or air) on the second day, to "water" and "earth," on the third, etc., the Earth gradually becoming the heterogeneous compound of elements it is known to be today—a strictly scientific process!

Under the religious stories of Adam, Eve, Cain, Seth, and Noah, is hidden the truth about the early races of mankind—the title "Adam" being the symbolic name for a whole Race. How else explain the use of the plural term "them" at the time of the first creation of man? "So God created man in his own image . . . and God blessed them [plural], and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply." (Gen. 1: 27-28.) Mankind's progress, during the millions of years of its existence upon Earth, is divided, according to *The Secret Doctrine,* into seven vast periods of racial development—the Seven Great Races, they are called. These Great Races, not to be confounded with the numberless ethnic, national, and tribal races known today, which are only minor sub-divisions, allegorize the seven stages of physical, intellectual, and spiritual development of mankind. They represent the unfoldment of man's latent powers and faculties which, beginning with the First Race millions of years ago, will continue far into the future when, with the completion of the Seventh Race, mankind will be perfected—a race of Adepts.

The religious scriptures of all peoples record the story of these Great Races in one form or another. Besides the teaching as given

in Genesis, John, the Revelator, speaks of them in this way: "And there are seven kings [Races]: five are fallen, and one [the Sixth] is, and the other [the Seventh] is not yet come." (Rev. 17:10.) The phrase "five are fallen, and one is" will be better understood by the teaching that for many long ages the enlightened portion of mankind has been of Fifth-race development—hence "five [Races] are fallen"—while some Egos of Sixth-Race characteristics may have been incarnating for many thousands of years.

Adam, in the light of this teaching, represents the First Race Mankind. This Adamic Race was "mindless," not knowing the difference between "good and evil," and it was also *sexless*. After the First Race (Adam *Solus*) had run its course, the Second Race, symbolized by Adam-Eve, which was a hermaphrodite race, came into being—the phrase "male and female created he them" indicating their bi-sexuality. Third Race Humanity, states *The Secret Doctrine,* is represented by Cain-Abel, called "the Separating Hermaphrodite," while Seth-Enos symbolizes the Fourth, the Atlanteans, which was a race of two opposite sexes. Fifth Race Mankind—ourselves—which was born after the flood that destroyed the continent of Atlantis, is the Race of Noah, to which the advanced portion of present-day mankind belongs. Each of the Seven Great Races, it is taught, is separated from its predecessor by either a deluge, a fire, or a cataclysm of one kind or another. Such is the strange teaching of Theosophy, or the Secret Doctrine, which is based upon the *Book of Dzyan,* that primeval scripture of the Human Race which is held to be the source of every great world Religion, the Hebrew scriptures themselves being but a poor fragment torn from the pavement of that great Temple of Truth. The term "Dzyan" (phonetically *Zion*) is the name of the ancient esoteric School to which Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, and the "Wise Men" of all nations belong, and to which they owe their knowledge. (Bible students who wish to know more about the symbology of their teaching are referred to H. P. Blavatsky's two monumental works, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. In the latter volume, the *Book of Dzyan* with Commentaries is given, showing the presence of its teachings in all world religions.)

The Adamic First Race, it is taught, was a man of *form* only, and not until much later did the *mind principle* awaken. These two stages of development seem to be referred to by St. Paul in 1 Cor. 15:44-47, where he speaks of the *two* Adams:

> There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.
>
> And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.
>
> Howbeit that was not first which was spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.
>
> The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.

The first Adam spoken of here, which Paul calls "natural," was the man of Form, made of highly ethereal or spiritual substance, and it was immortal, not subject to death. This earthly Form of man, besides being mindless, sexless, invisible (from our point of view) and deathless, was also of giant proportions. It was not until the form was complete that the Lords from heaven, *who are ourselves,* could incarnate and provide the "quickening spirit," whereby the whole human race would be lighted-up with *Manas,* or Mind, and thus be able to know the difference between "good and evil." For the incarnating Lords, the descent into matter represented a "Fall," for, from Gods of heavenly wisdom and power, amounting almost to omniscience, we became ignorant, sinning mortals, imprisoned in forms of clay and subject to death.

The incarnation of these Spiritual Fires, or Lords, brought, it is said, a densification, or solidification, of matter—so that the original forms, which had been tenuous and ethereal, became by comparison gross and heavy. This is the meaning of the statement that they were given "coats of skin." While not nearly so material as the bodies of the race today, they were nevertheless "earthy"; much too gross, in fact, to be suited for life in the Garden of Eden (which was a heavenly abode). "Therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden" to an earthly habitation. Thus, from a state or condition of mindless, sexless spirituality, which was not subject to death, Adam became a race of self-conscious Gods, or human beings, imprisoned in gross earthly forms which were subject to decay. As all human beings, even to this day, possess bodies belonging to the race headed by Adam, may we not understand now what St. Paul meant by the statement that "in Adam all die?" (1 Cor. 15:22.) And in view of the fact that "all human acts," as stated in *The Bhagavad-Gita,* "are involved in faults, as the fire is wrapped in smoke," is it not clear what Jesus meant when he said that none are without sin? (John 8:7.)

What, then, was Adam's sin? What heinous crime did the father of our race commit, the results of which were so "dreadful" and far-

reaching that not only the whole human family should be subject to sin and death but also a large segment of the present population should be tied head and foot to the "original sin" complex, to the utterly demoralizing notion that because of Adam's so-called sin, every member of the race is therefore inherently corrupt? Adam's sin, evidently, was this: He disobeyed the command (not of God, but of the jealous *Elohim*) that he must not eat of the fruit of a certain tree that grew in the midst of the Garden of Eden, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Prompted by Eve, who was urged on by the serpent (another symbol), Adam confessed that he did eat thereof, after which he is shown to have been able to know right from wrong.

Sin and death, therefore, are the heavy price paid by the heavenly Adam, and by each and every Reincarnating Ego to this day, for *the right to think and know and choose!* It is the story all over again of the Greek Prometheus who brought "fire" (the fire of mind) to ignorant mankind, and thus was condemned by Zeus to be chained to a rock of torture (the human body), upon which he was forced to suffer every imaginable pain and indignity. Is the privilege of being able to think and choose worth the tortures men suffer by virtue of the fact that they are *mind-beings?* Would we choose, if we could, to return to the passive, animalistic, even though spiritual, condition of Adam before the "fall," in which condition we would be incapable of discerning good from evil? It is very doubtful that we would! For in spite of the tribulations attendant upon earth-life, and the periodical deaths to which our bodies are subject, *we are Knowers in our own right, with the power to Choose.* And what greater blessing than this can any creature have? It is this divine prerogative alone, which only human beings possess, that makes possible all and everything we cherish, that enables us to understand the meaning of love, justice and God. Is it not the responsibility and the duty, therefore, of every *lighted Mind-Being,* to exercise to the full this divine prerogative—to discriminate, to choose, and to think for one's self at all times, lest the sacrifice be made in vain?

If our Christian brothers prefer their literal interpretation of the Bible to the symbolic meaning as given above, then the Theosophist must ask them to explain why their God, the Creator, produced a man devoid of mind and sense, in the first place? If the Creator intended man to remain a half-witted, or rather witless, being, as He

evidently did, since He forbade him to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, how can we avoid the thought that the creation was aimless, and even *cruel,* if produced by an omniscient and perfect God? And finally, if Adam and Eve are admitted to be ignorant of good and evil before eating the forbidden fruit, how could they be expected to know that disobedience was "evil"? And if they did not know, wherein did they sin, and how justify the punishment following an act for which they might well plead *non compos?*

The "original sin" of Adam, therefore, was no real sin at all, according to Theosophy. The story given in Genesis, counterpart of which is to be found in all great scriptures, means simply that the "Fall" into matter of the Divine Pilgrim brought with it, necessarily, the experiences of sin and death. "For spirit when invested with matter or *prakriti,"* says *The Bhagavad-Gita,* "experienceth the qualities which proceed from *prakriti."*

> Starting upon the long journey immaculate; descending more and more into sinful matter, and having connected himself with every atom in manifested *Space*—the *Pilgrim,* having struggled through and suffered in every form of life and being, is only at the bottom of the valley of matter, and half through his cycle, when he has identified himself with collective Humanity. This, *he has made in his own image.* In order to progress upwards and homewards, the "God" has now to ascend the weary uphill path of the Golgotha of Life. It is the martyrdom of self-conscious existence. Like Visvakarman, he has to sacrifice *himself to himself* in order to redeem all creatures, to resurrect from the many into the *One Life.* Then he ascends into heaven indeed; where, plunged into the incomprehensible absolute Being and Bliss of Paranirvana, he reigns unconditionally, and whence he will re-descend again at the next "coming," which one portion of humanity expects in its dead-letter sense as the *second advent,* and the other as the last "Kalki Avatar." (*The Secret Doctrine* I, 268.)

If the dogma of Original Sin, upon which the tenet of the inherent wickedness of man is built, is thus shown to be a misinterpretation of the grandest of all human Dramas, and if man, instead, is seen to be *inherently divine*—what of Election and Predestination? This will be the subject of part two of this paper.

(*To be concluded*)

YOUTH FORUM

Understanding Selfishness

It is no news that we live in a selfish world, and it would seem that nothing could possibly be more important at this time—even for the physical survival of our civilization—than to try to develop a sense of altruism within ourselves and in the hearts of all men. This of course we know, probably more than just intellectually, and certainly we should try never to forget it during the critical present. Yet once this has been said, and been grasped as fully as possible, it might be of some value to move a bit closer than such a general statement to the texture of those particular situations and ambiguous obligations which compose so much of our daily lives. For in certain contexts it may be necessary to entertain the thought that some kinks of "selfishness" are justifiable, for a time at least, and may even comprise a very real duty that must be done.

It is true that H.P.B. describes (and in a sense defines) the adept as one who, if interrupted by a boorish person while involved in some highly important work—work perhaps for the spiritual welfare of all mankind—will nonetheless lay that work aside, and turn to the inquirer, and give him his full attention, respect and sympathy. All the same, one is tempted to speculate that if there were not one but a hundred such inconsiderate persons ready to intrude and usurp the master's time, he would just get up quietly and lock the door. This is not selfishness, one might say, but merely the sacrificing of a smaller "duty" for a higher and much more important one. True enough, and yet at our own stage of development, where there are many situations which seem fairly analogous to this, we find usually that the situations are less clear-cut. The work we may be engaged in is probably not nearly as important as the adept's work; and the people who interrupt us perhaps are our personal friends, good friends whose feelings we would not willingly hurt. Which way is the unselfish one then? Would it not be selfish for us to exclude the others? But then, might it not be far more subtly and insidiously

selfish if we allow those others to trample on our time? On occasion, so-called "altruism" may be cowardice in disguise.

The important thing, it seems, is to act, to be the active agent, the originator of our own karma and destiny. If we are wise enough, it may be possible to create and control our situations without either excluding others or being overrun by them. Perhaps by explaining to them the necessity for our course of action, or just by moving faster ourselves, so that we can cover the necessary ground and still leave room and time for these others, we may avoid having to hurt them or to be hurt by them. These are some of the possible solutions, at any rate. They may not always be workable, however. If, for example, we just happen in some instance *not* to be wise and tactful enough, or if, as is sometimes the case, those others prove unable or unwilling to understand the needs of our situation, or again, if it should turn out to be impossible for us to "cover the ground" quickly enough to suit them, then we will find that the problem of right action is still with us, and still forces us towards a clear decision: shall we act regardless of others, or shall we let others overrun our lives?

This problem, which in little ways we all have to face innumerable times, is one which cannot really be solved out of context; that is, apart from the contingent details of each situation. If the work we are concerned with happens to be of a certain importance and urgency, it may be really our duty to act in spite of the interference of others; if it happens not to be of any such obvious importance, it may be "selfish" of us to go ahead with it. The relative importance of the various factors involved seems, then, to be the determiner of the moral quality of our choice. But who is to "determine" that determiner, who is to decide what is important and what is not important?

It seems valuable to discuss all these complicated considerations (and they become more and more complicated the more one thinks about them), if only to point up the web-like complexity of moral life. Too many people (one thinks especially of certain politicians and of those who listen to them) tend to oversimplify life, and to substitute slogans or catchwords for an honest and uncompromising search. This careful kind of searching is essential, and not only so that we may be sure to "do right" by others, but equally for our own moral development. For by learning to pick our way along through the vast labyrinth of obstacles and obligations we live in, we can

in time perhaps develop a certain agility, a sense of moral balance, which can help us pass through the densest mazes unscathed. It seems that it is in this sense primarily that we speak of the masters as those who are "incapable" of doing wrong. They simply cannot fall, for they are firmly centered and have all their powers at their immediate command.

It is important, however, not to lose sight of ourselves in this discussion, since it is at our present "un-centered" point of development that all the impasses and difficulties occur. And although this search for inner equilibrium and agility is undeniably of the highest importance, there seem nevertheless to be many situations in our daily lives in which we must "do wrong" by ourselves if we would "do right" by others, and *vice versa*—situations in which we cannot sidestep some measure of guilt no matter what we do. The logical answer, no doubt, would be to choose the lesser of the two evils, assuming it were possible to determine which one was the lesser evil (and assuming there were only two); but possibly the more *important* answer would be: choose as you see fit, or if necessary choose arbitrarily, but in any case have the courage to stand by your choice. It sometimes seems that when people "fall" it is not so much because they have followed the wrong path boldly, as because they did not with consistency follow any path at all. Of course we must think, we must use all the discretion we can muster; but if, like the self-conscious centipede in the fable, we start brooding about how it is we are able to move our feet, we will end in a jumble of inaction. This kind of thinking is not at all the same as that searching towards a choice which we were speaking about above, but rather is a self-indulgence. It is Epimethean rather than Promethean, a weakness, not a strength.

At certain periods in life, or at least in certain situations, it almost seems that strength is more important than ethical correctness. As before, of course, we find it is not possible to generalize about such matters without distorting much of the picture. We tend, for instance, to think with disapproval of the wildness of today's youth, and to wish that they possessed a stronger ethical sense; and yet the huge majority of young people in this country—those who have not made sensations on the front page, and who never will—seem rather to have conservative tendencies, and oftentimes seem actually inhibited, strapped down by a set of middle-class "ethics" hardly appropriate to their years. There is indecision and worry, particularly

among the more intelligent of them. And there is an absence of joy.

We cannot go very deeply into this matter now, but perhaps a part of the reason for this trend has to do with the premium we now set upon marketable intelligence, or head-learning. Work with the hands is gradually coming to be regarded as somewhat "proletarian," and the heart—well, that's all rather sentimental and inexact. The advice we give and are given today seems to come down in the end to little more than: out-smart the Russians, don't offer them your hand, and certainly not your heart; out-smart your business rivals, don't let them get an advantage. This kind of thinking is sanctioned on a nation-wide and even world-wide scale. Is it any wonder, then, even if there were no other contributing factors, that the intelligent members of today's "crop" of American youngsters feel stymied and confused, and—lacking truly worthy ideals—are inactive in both hand and heart?

"Act," one wishes one could exhort them. "Create in spite of your fathers. Rebel and create. That is the function of youth." And to this, one might even add that if this rebellion seems to require a certain amount of selfishness, a turning away from the paths which others would have them follow (and which indeed are the paths which lead to a standard brand of success), then they must learn the importance of being selfish—only temporarily, one would hope, but certainly until they have found their own unique callings and contributions, and their own personal visions of life. That takes strength. But only the strong seek the truth.

On Inward Growth

Let us consider wisdom first. Can we be wiser by reason of something which we have forgotten? Unquestionably we can. Wisdom is not merely, or chiefly, amassed facts, or even recorded judgments. Of that we have sufficient evidence in this life. And so a man who dies after acquiring knowledge—and all men acquire some—might enter his new life, deprived indeed of his knowledge, but not deprived of the increased strength and delicacy of mind which he had gained in acquiring knowledge. And, if so, he will be wiser in the second life because of what has happened in the first.

—John McTaggart

MAN—GOD OR CREATURE?

ESOTERIC philosophy teaches the existence of two Egos in man, the mortal or personal, and the Higher, the Divine and the Impersonal. Ego means, simply, "Self," the consciousness in man, the I am I or the feeling of "I-am-ship." From the remotest antiquity mankind as a whole have always been convinced of the existence of an impersonal spiritual entity within the personal man. Our Ego, that which lives and thinks and feels independently of us in our mortal casket, does more than believe. It knows that there exists a God in nature, for the sole and invincible Artificer of all lives in us as we live in Him. No dogmatic faith or exact science is able to uproot that intuitional feeling inherent in man, when he has once fully realized it in himself.

"Pilgrim" is the appellation given to our *Monad* (the two in one) during its cycle of incarnations. It is the only immortal and eternal principle in us, being an indivisible part of the integral whole—the Universal Spirit. The Higher Self is the Supreme Divine Spirit overshadowing man. It is the crown of the upper spiritual Triad in man —*Atman*. The first self-made adept initiated but a select few, and kept silence with the multitudes. He recognized his God and felt the great Being within himself. The Atman, the Self, the mighty Lord and Protector, once that man knew him as the *"I am,"* the *"Ego Sum,"* the *"Ahmi,"* showed his full power to him who could recognize the *"still small voice."* This idea of a divine Self, once expressed, everything else must acknowledge its supremacy.

The Earth gives Man his body, the gods (Dhyanis) his five inner principles, the *psychic Shadow,* of which those gods are often the animating principles. SPIRIT (Atman) is one—and indiscrete. The Atman or Spirit (the Spiritual SELF) passing like a thread through the five subtle bodies (or principles, *Koshas*) is called "thread-soul," or *Sutratman* in Vedantic philosophy. The human Ego is neither Atman nor Buddhi, but the higher *Manas*: the intellectual fruition, and the efflorescence of the intellectual self-conscious *Egotism*—in the higher spiritual sense. The ancient works refer to it

---

NOTE.—A student's collation from Theosophical texts.

as Karana Sarira on the plane of *Sutratma,* which is the golden thread on which, like beads, the various personalities of the higher Ego are strung.

Like an actor, the Ego is forced to play during the cycle of necessity, up to the very threshold of *Paranirvana,* many parts such as may be unpleasant to it. It is a strange law of Nature that, on this plane, the higher (Spiritual) Nature should be, so to say, in bondage to the lower. Unless the Ego takes refuge in the Atman, the ALL-SPIRIT, and merges entirely into the essence thereof, the personal Ego may goad it to the bitter end. We say that we only allow the presence of the radiation of Spirit (or Atma) on the astral capsule, and so far only as that spiritual radiancy is concerned. We say that man and Soul have to conquer their immortality by ascending towards the Unity with which, if successful, they will be finally linked, and into which they are finally, so to speak, absorbed. The individualization of man after death depends on the Spirit, not on his Soul and body.

Manas is the fifth principle . . . that portion of Manas which follows the two higher principles is the ancestral Soul, the bright, immortal thread of the higher Ego, to which clings the spiritual aroma of all the lives and births. For *Sutratma* is, literally "the thread of spirit," the Immortal Ego, the Individuality which incarnates in man one life after the other, and upon which are strung his countless personalities. Your *spiritual* "I" is immortal, but from your present self it can carry away into Eternity that only which has become worthy of immortality, namely, the aroma alone of the flower that has been mown by death. Your present "I" is not the body, nor yet is it Manas-Sutratma, but Sutratma Buddhi.

Spirituality is on its ascending arc, and the animal or physical impedes it from steadily progressing on the path of its evolution only when the selfishness of the *personality* has so strongly infected the real *inner* man with its lethal virus, that the upward attraction has lost all its power on the thinking reasonable man.

HERETICS AND THE RENAISSANCE

[In any age, when a doctrine is taken to be a truth, and when fanaticism compels lip service to exclusive group beliefs, the ideas of Theosophy seem buried and forgotten. We discover, however, that this is never entirely the case. The insistences of dogma and prejudice are like the snows which hide the promise of spring. But seeds survive beneath the snow and, even during the darkest centuries of Western history, there was heat and warmth enough under the surface to allow some of these seeds to germinate. In a sense, then, the history of the relationship between "heretics" and the "renaissance" is the history of every age.

Of the ten articles comprising the series, "Heretics and the Renaissance," the first seven are derived entirely from recognized historical sources; the remaining three consist solely of quotations from the writings of H. P. Blavatsky, making, in effect, a review *in the light of Theosophy* of the main ideas dealt with earlier. The theosophical student who has assembled this material has done what H.P.B. spoke of doing in her Introduction to *The Secret Doctrine*—put together "a nosegay of culled flowers," adding only "the string that ties them." Editors, THEOSOPHY]

III—THE CATHARI OR ALBIGENSES

THE anti-sacerdotal heresies of the Middle Ages were directed against the abuses in doctrine and practice which priestcraft had invented to enslave the souls of men. In briefly reviewing the vicissitudes of the heretics it must be borne in mind that with scarce an exception the authorities are exclusively their antagonists and persecutors. Saving a few Waldensian tracts and a single Catharan ritual, their literature has wholly perished. (Lea I, 61-2.)

The population and civilization of the *midi* [in France] were wholly different from those of the north. A strange admixture of races rendered the citizens of Narbonne or Marseilles quite different from the inhabitants of Paris—quite as different as the *Langue d'Oc* from the *Langue d'Oyl.* The feudal tie which bound the Count of Toulouse, or the Marquis of Provence, or the Duke of Aquitaine to

the King of Paris or the Emperor was but feeble, and when the last named fief was carried by Eleanor to Henry II, the rival pretensions of England and France preserved the virtual independence of the great feudatories of the South, leading to antagonisms which came to full fruition in the Albigensian crusades. (Lea I, 66-7.)

The contrast of civilization was as marked as that of race. Nowhere in Europe had culture and luxury made such progress as in the south of France. Chivalry and poetry were assiduously cultivated by the nobles. At the brilliant courts of Toulouse, of Provence, of Montpelier, lords and ladies listened with rapture to the songs and tales of the troubadours, who were gladly received in all the castles, where the nobles of both sexes engaged in poetry. All this no doubt goes to prove the high degree of culture attained in those regions by the feudal society of that day. Even in the cities, proud of their wealth, enriched through their trade with the orient or by their industry, citizens boasted a degree of education and enlightenment unknown elsewhere. Nowhere in Europe, moreover, were the clergy more negligent in their duties or more despised by the people. There was little earnestness of religious conviction among either prelates or nobles to stimulate persecution, so that there was considerable freedom of belief. In no other land did the despised Jew enjoy such privileges. His right to hold land in *franc-alleu* was similar to that of the Christians; he was admitted to public office, and his administrative ability rendered him a favorite in such capacity with both prelate and noble; his synagogues were undisturbed, and the Hebrew school of Narbonne was renowned in Israel as the home of the Kimchis. (Lea I, 67.) Provence was even filled with Jewish poets and philosophers. (Schmidt I, 66.)

Under such influences, those who really possessed religious convictions were but little deterred by prejudice or the fear of persecution from criticising the shortcomings of the Church, or from seeking what might more nearly respond to their aspirations. (Lea I, 67.) The Church in demanding a submission which to the lords seemed incompatible with the honor and the joyous liberty of the life of chivalry, saw the most powerful men of the country drift away; they resented its authority and were indifferent to the dangers facing catholicism. The clergy itself was affected by the same spirit; some of its members were to be found among the troubadours and most of them, far from setting an example of Christian austerity, were eager to gain the friendship of the lords in order to share their

pleasures and enjoy their protection. Those who benefited most by this freedom of thought were the heretics. (Schmidt I, 66.)

[Of the more durable and formidable heresies which took stubborn root in the south of France during the twelfth century none is better known than that of the Cathari, being variously called Pataris, Poblicans, Bulgars, Albigenses. Their history, as already mentioned, is difficult to trace due to the fact that the only source of information available is the testimony of their enemies. The origin of the sect is very obscure and a number of often contradictory theories have been advanced. C. Schmidt, considered one of the foremost authorities on the subject, disagrees with the view held by other scholars that Catharism is a renewal of Manichaeism. He thinks the Cathari have an origin independent of earlier dualistic heresies, to be looked for in Slavish countries, and that it is from there that they spread over the rest of Europe. H. C. Lea, another authority, disagrees with Schmidt and points out]: "A further irrefrangible evidence of the derivation of Catharism from Manichaeism is furnished by the sacred thread and garment which were worn by all the Perfect among the Cathari. This custom is too peculiar to have an independent origin, and is manifestly the Mazdean *kosti* and saddarah, the sacred thread and shirt, the wearing of which was essential to all believers, and the use of which by both Zends and Brahmans shows that its origin is to be traced to the prehistoric period anterior to the separation of those branches of the Aryan family. Among the Cathari the wearer of the thread and vestment was what was known among the inquisitors as the 'haereticus indutus' or 'vestitus,' initiated into all the mysteries of the heresy." (Lea I, 92.)

The Cathari inherited certain doctrines of eastern origin, such as the Manichaean dualism, docetism in relation to the person of Christ [that his body was merely a phantom or appearance], and a theory of metempsychosis. They seem, like the Manichees, to have disowned the authority of the Old Testament; and the division of their adherents into *perfecti* and *credentes* is similar to the Manichaen distinction between *electi* and *auditores*. The statement that they rejected marriage, often made by Roman Catholics, has probably no other foundation in fact than that they denied that marriage was a sacrament; and many other statements as to their doctrine and practice must be received at least with suspicion as coming from prejudiced and implacable opponents. (Britannica, 9th ed.: "Albigenses.")

The Catharist system [according to Schmidt] claims to be a philosophy and a religion, metaphysics and a cult, a doctrine for the mind and a guide for life. In Catharism the difference between spirit and matter is irreconcilable; one is the principle of good, the other of evil; these two Catharism considers as essentially and absolutely opposed to each other. In the system of absolute dualism, good and evil are equally eternal; there is no final victory of the good God over evil; never will the two opposites be reconciled, the evil God will always reign side by side with the good God and will never cease to be his antagonist. (Schmidt II, 167-8.)

Among the early Christians [Lea states] there was a strong tendency to adopt the theory of transmigration as an explanation of the apparent injustice of the judgments of God. (Lea I, 99 fn.) Human souls are all fallen spirits passing through probation, and this was generally the belief of all the sects of the Cathari, leading to a theory of transmigration very similar to that of Buddhism, though modified by the belief that Christ's earthly mission was the redemption of these fallen spirits. Until the perfected soul could return to its Creator, as in the *moksha,* or absorption in Brahma of the Hindu, it was forced to undergo repeated existences (Lea I, 98-9.)

The doctrine of the Paulicians was identical with that of the Albigenses in all essentials. The simple dualism of Mazdeism, which regards the universe as the mingled creations of Ormazd and Ahriman, each seeking to neutralize the labors of the other, and carrying on interminable warfare in every detail of life and nature, explains the existence of evil in a manner to enlist man to contribute his assistance to Ormazd in the eternal conflict, by good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. (Lea I, 91.)

Maurice Magre in his *Magicians, Seers, and Mystics* (E. P. Dutton, N.Y., 1932, p. 96) calls the Albigenses "western Buddhists, who introduced a blend of Gnostic Christianity into the Oriental doctrine," and he expresses the opinion that the Albigenses of Languedoc possessed the truth in all its purity (page 11).

[Blodwen Davies in an article entitled "The Peaceful Heretics" (*Manas,* June 3, 1953) points out that] "the Albigenses and some other sects may have grafted onto the apostolic Christian teachings, traditions of the Gnostics, or it may be that remnants of ancient Gnostic groups which once flourished in southern France, grafted the Christian teachings onto their more ancient ones."

[An unusually interesting account of the origin and history of the

Albigenses is given by Görres in his *Die Christliche Mystik* (Regensburg, 1840, Verlag von G. Joseph Manz), Vol. III, pages 26-32, where he says]: "In its original form Manichaeism, derived mainly from the Zendavesta, was too far removed from the Christian teachings for Manichaeism to assert itself against Christianity in the long run. It therefore adopted various more compromising forms and thereby succeeded in surviving until a late date. Toward the end of the fourth century it spread as Priscillianism to the farthest West, to Spain and Galicia, where it struck such deep roots that at the close of the sixth century it had not yet been eradicated. About the middle of the following century it reappeared through Constantine in Syrian Armenia as Paulicianism, then spread through Asia Minor during the eighth century, and gained still more adherents when, rejuvenated by Sergius, it even partly enjoyed towards the end of this period the favor of the Byzantine emperors. Soon after, however, in the middle of the ninth century, the pride of the sect precipitated a warfare that lasted for almost a century and ended with its defeat. But when its remains were finally transplanted to Thracia into the valleys of the Haemus Mountains, they combined with others previously brought there and began to spread anew under the name of Bogomiles. Psellus became acquainted with them, or with a related sect, around the middle of the eleventh century, under the name of Messalians, Euchites or Enthusiasts. In the meantime, however, they had spread more and more to the West through Bosnia and Dalmatia, by means of trade connections and missions, and even before the year 1000 had reached Italy, gaining many followers specially in Milan. As they had immigrated from foreign countries they were called Passagini, and also Bulgarians because coming primarily from Bulgaria. They, however, considering themselves the pre-eminently pure, called themselves Cathari i.e., Puritans. They were also known by such names as Patarini and Piphlers, and again Beghards and Lollards. While their doctrine in the South reached as far as the Pontifical State, it quickly spread from Italy to France, where it had been germinating in secret for a long time. In 1017 it suddenly appeared openly among the clergy of Orleans. From there it soon spread into several provinces of the country, and particularly in the Aquitanian South gaining such strength that as early as 1030 a synod had to be held against it in Toulouse, followed by others in the course of the 12th century, until finally its growth in those regions was checked by the bloody Albigensian war, which, however, did

not bring about its extinction. For the heretics had not confined themselves to France, but taking this country again as a point of departure they had invaded all the lower Western countries; having appeared as early as 1052 in the Goslar region, they had migrated to the lower Rhine, and from Vasconia in the middle of the twelfth century to England; their associations had also covered Spain. With the emigrants of the old world they went to the new world where they established themselves."

[Concerning the character of these medieval sectarians most writers agree that it was one of the most remarkable in the record of civilization: "a combination of unflagging industry, cold common sense and ardent mysticism," according to Bayley.] The Albigenses were greatly beloved by their neighbors. Their industry, morality, and general sweetness of character, led to their being known proverbially as "the good people." Their Italian name "Cathari" is from the Greek root signifying "the pure ones." (Bayley pp. 12, 21.)

Edmond Holmes, in his excellent brief treatise entitled *The Holy Heretics* (pp. 75-6) has this to say: "Such evidence as is available, including the testimony of the enemies of the Catharists, goes to show that the general level of Catharist morality was far higher than that of Catholic. This it might well be, for in that period morality in all Christian countries was at a low ebb. The Church itself set the world a bad example. The worldliness and immorality of the priesthood were among the causes which favored the spread of Catharism and other heresies. The Catharist ministers and *perfecti* set their followers an example of ascetic purity, self-abnegation, devotion to duty, and service to others. From all the accounts the morals of the Cathari were not only high for the age in which they lived, but would have been considered high in any age. It is high time that the aspersions on their character and conduct which have been passed on, with the connivance of the Church, from generation to generation, by a succession of irresponsible historians, not one of whom had studied the available documentary evidence, should be withdrawn."

Not only were the Albigenses exponents of pure Christianity, but they were devoted apostles of Education. They would have endorsed Meredith's dictum that Culture is half-way to Heaven. Among their earliest documents (*circa* 1100) is an anthology of philosophic sentences entitled *Li Parlar de li Philosophes et Doctoro,* and a catechism of instruction for children. They maintained night

schools where in secrecy was taught the art of reading. Berard comments on what he terms a fact unique in the history of the Middle Ages, namely that every Vaudois possessed a rudimentary education. (Bayley, p. 82.)

The extensive popular literature of the Cathari has utterly perished, saving a Catharan version of the New Testament in Romance and a book of ritual. Their strict morality was never corrupted. (Lea I, 101.) Their aim was to restore the primitive purity of the Church, to understand the Church in its spiritual meaning, and to represent it in its ideal sanctity and perfection. They accused the catholics not only of having mixed many extraneous things with the teachings of the New Testament, but also of regarding Christianity from an inferior and material point of view, and of having been unable to free themselves from Jewish influences, by not rejecting the books of the old alliance. The Catharists protested against the Roman traditions and institutions, against external worship ("le culte trop exterieur"), against the vices of many members of the clergy; they protested against the very existence of the Catholic Church. (Schmidt II, 171.) In the midst of a catholic world Catharism, the religion of the Albigenses, established a church which for several centuries was able to resist all measures taken for its destruction. (Schmidt I, Preface.)

The influence of Catharism on the Catholic Church was enormous. To counteract it celibacy was finally imposed on the clergy, and the great mendicant orders evolved; while the constant polemic of the Cathar teachers against the cruelty, rapacity and irrascibility of the Jewish tribal god led the church to prohibit the circulation of the Old Testament among the laymen. The sacrament of "extreme unction" was also evolved by way of competing with the death-bed *consolamentum* of the Catharists. (*Britannica,* 11th ed.: "Cathars.")

* * *

Sources used in this installment: Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages,* Vol. I; C. Schmidt, *Histoire et Doctrine de la Secte des Cathares Ou Albigeois* (Paris, 1848); *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Ninth edition, under "Albigenses"; Maurice Magre, *Magicians, Seers, and Mystics* (E. P. Dutton, N.Y., 1932); Blodwen Davies, "The Peaceful Heretics," (*Manas,* June 3, 1953); J. v. Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik;* Harold Bayley, *A New Light on the Renaissance;* Edmond Holmes, *The Holy Heretics* (Watts & Co., London, 1948); *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Eleventh Edition, under "Cathars".

(*To be continued*)

on the lookout

Continuing Interest in Existentialism

As one reads the existentialist philosophers, one may wonder if existentialism is really a new "philosophy," or simply a new attitude in philosophic thought. For example, Dr. Frederick Mayer notes in his article, "Education and Existentialism" (*Manas,* Dec. 2, 1964), that "William James is the fountainhead for both pragmatism and existentialism." Applying the existentialist emphasis to education, Dr. Mayer writes:

> The soul-searching questions, which are the basis of the educative process, indicate that no generation can be taught in a formal way, that the basic attitudes and motivations must be reshaped and redefined by every generation. . . . Such a view of education and man accepts the fragmentary aspects of all experience. *Totality is an abstraction; my insight is but a pebble in the stream of eternity.* Yet I must not subordinate it to the commands of authority and fail to express it because it cannot approach a view of totality. The existentialist view is deliberately ego-centered for it believes that unless the individual has explored himself and has searched subjectively with vigor and earnestness, life becomes a cyclical exercise. It says to the individual: you are qualitatively different from all parts of nature if you will become aware of your awareness and if you seek an authentic existence through self-exploration and avoid all forms of dependence. The issue of existence then goes beyond life and death, it is the issue of drifting impersonally or living creatively with a Faustian thirst for subjective depth and unending enlightenment.

Existentialist Conclusions Vary

An interesting feature of existentialism is the widely-differing conclusions of two of its best-known exponents—Jean-Paul Sartre and Gabriel Marcel. The latter devotes the second of four essays appearing in his *Philosophy of Existentialism* (Citadel, 1962) to pointing out and discussing these differences. (Actually, according to Simone de Beauvoir, in *Harper's* for last November, while Sartre repudiated the term "existentialism," saying, "My philosophy is a philosophy of existence; I don't know what Existentialism is," he has been literally forced to accept the designation.) Marcel feels

that "Sartre makes an exaggerated use of the concept of negation," suggesting:

> Existentialism stands to-day at a parting of the ways: it is, in the last analysis, obliged either to deny or to transcend itself. It denies itself quite simply when it falls to the level of infra-dialectical materialism. It transcends itself, or it tends to transcend itself, when it opens itself out to the experience of the supra-human, an experience which can hardly be ours in a genuine and lasting way this side of death, but of which the reality is attested by mystics, and of which the possibility is warranted by any philosophy which refuses to be immured in the postulate of absolute immanence or to subscribe in advance to the denial of the beyond and of the unique and veritable transcendence. . . . Either this assertion of man's total mortality is the expression of an existential wish—and in that case it cannot be other than contingent—or else it presupposes an objective, pseudo-scientific realism in regard to death, and implies a crass materialism which belongs to the infra-existential levels of philosophy.

The Mission of the Philosopher

Theosophists, may well find points of interest in the following from Marcel's "Essay in Autobiography":

> The supreme mission of the philosopher cannot consist in proclaiming a certain number of official truths liable to rally votes at international congresses. In the last analysis, such truths inevitably turn out to be sheer platitudes. The imperishable glory of a Kierkegaard or a Nietzsche consists perhaps mainly in this, that they have proved, not only by their arguments, but by their trials and by their whole life, that a philosopher worthy of the name cannot be a man of congresses, and that he deviates from his path every time that he allows himself to be torn from the solitude which is his calling. It is only by clinging to this solitude that he remains at the disposal of those who await from him, if not a lead, at least a stimulation. A candidate's answer to an examiner is or is not satisfactory; but then in an examination there are clearly formulated rules and the stage has been set in advance, whereas in the real world, which is, or should be, that of the philosopher, there is nothing of the kind. The stage always remains to be set; in a sense everything starts from zero, and a philosopher is not worthy of the name unless he not only accepts but wills this harsh necessity. This perpetual beginning again, which may seem scandalous to the scientist or the technician, is an inevitable part of all genuinely philosophical work; and perhaps it reflects in its own order the fresh start of every new awakening and of every birth. Does not the very structure of duration and of life show that philosophical thought is un-

faithful to reality whenever it attempts to proceed from conclusion to conclusion towards a *Summa* which, in the end, needs only to be expounded and memorised paragraph by paragraph?

"Being"—the Necessary Imponderable

Marcel's essay, "On the Ontological Mystery," formulates his philosophy. After noting that excessive emphasis on *function* dehumanizes the person, Marcel goes on to say:

> Provided it is taken in its metaphysical and not its physical sense, the distinction between the *full* and the *empty* seems to me more fundamental than that between the *one* and the *many*. Life in a world centered on function is liable to despair because in reality this world is *empty,* rings hollow; and if it resists this temptation it is only to the extent that there come into play from within it and in its favour certain hidden forces which are beyond its power to conceive or to recognize. . . .
>
> In such a world the ontological need, the need of being, is exhausted in exact proportion to the breaking up of personality on the one hand and, on the other, to the triumph of the category of the "purely natural" and the consequent atrophy of the faculty of *wonder.*
>
> Being is—or should be—necessary. It is impossible that everything should be reduced to a play of successive appearances which are inconsistent with each other. . . . I aspire to participate in this being, in this reality—and perhaps this aspiration is already a degree of participation, however rudimentary. . . .
>
> As for defining the word "being," let us admit that it is extremely difficult. I would merely suggest this method of approach: being is what withstands—or what would withstand—an exhaustive analysis bearing on the data of experience and aiming to reduce them step by step to elements increasingly devoid of intrinsic or significant value.

A Peculiar Stance

It may seem strange that Gabriel Marcel, reared by an apostate Catholic father and a Jewish grandmother, became a Catholic *after* the complete formulation of his existential philosophy. That this must have been due to some deep longing for psychic commitment rather than to any inadequacy he felt in his philosophy seems clear from his summation of "The Ontological Mystery":

> I would say that the recognition of the ontological mystery, in which I perceive as it were the central redoubt of metaphysics, is, no doubt, only possible through a sort of radiation which proceeds from revelation itself and which is perfectly well able to affect souls who are strangers to all positive religion of what-

ever kind; that this recognition, which takes place through certain higher modes of human experience, in no way involves the adherence to any given religion; but it enables those who have attained to it to perceive the possibility of a revelation in a way which is not open to those who have never ventured beyond the frontiers of the realm of the problematical and who have therefore never reached the point from which the mystery of being can be seen and recognised. Thus, a philosophy of this sort is carried by an irresistible movement towards the light which it perceives from afar and of which it suffers the secret attraction.

Spiritual Affirmation With Temporal Negation

The last sentence in the quotation from Marcel is illuminated by some passages from an earlier article by Dr. Mayer in *Manas* (Jan. 15, 1964) in which Theosophists may come the closest to feeling a kinship with this particular dimension of existentialist thought:

> Existentialism stresses the possibilities of man, his freedom and uniqueness, and his paradoxical place in the universe. . . . Indeed, Gabriel Marcel, one of the most brilliant contemporary existentialists, feels that it is his main function as a thinker to be a critic of abstractions. Existentialism looks to concreteness, to the interior aspects of experience.
>
> Existentialism points to a *new* morality, to a transvaluation of values. The immoral man is the Pharisee who is smug and self-satisfied, whose benevolence is only a mask for lethargy. Morality in existentialism implies a recognition of finiteness. The existentialist says in effect: I do not want to become an object. I do not want to be a machine. I do not want to live a conventional life. I realize that this experience, this moment is unique and hence I want to exploit it to the fullest. I have a sense of guilt which is ontological in its nature, for I will never explore completely my own potentialities and the possibilities of life. I am conscious that I must make awesome choices which involve my total being and that the end may not give me greater certainty but more awesome and agonizing uncertainty.
>
> This attitude has important implications in education, religion, and philosophy. Real education is not concerned with formulas and standards; real religion implies a personal relationship with the principle of reality; real philosophy is wisdom applied to the turmoil of experience. Genuine education, genuine religion, and genuine philosophy rest upon existential experiences which are the foundations of culture and the bases of man's moral emancipation and moral enlightenment.

On Capital Punishment

The British House of Lords is currently debating the pros and

cons of discontinuing the death penalty, with many members apparently in favor of such action. One conservative, however, speaking against abolition, said that "Britain's current wave of violence will spread unchecked if the nation abolishes death by hanging for murder" (Los Angeles *Times,* Jan. 3), and supported his argument by calling attention to the "holiday rash of violent crimes." Previously the *Times* (Dec. 22, 1964) had reported the result of the vote in the House of Commons:

> By an overwhelming margin, the House of Commons voted for abolition of the death penalty for murderers. The vote was 355-170. Previous commons votes in favor of abolition or suspension of the death penalty have been blocked by adverse votes in the House of Lords.
>
> This time, however, the commons vote was so decisive that parliamentary veterans thought either that the lords would fall into line or that the commons would invoke established procedures to override any lords' rejection. The measure now goes to the House of Lords, then back to the House of Commons sometime next year for a final reading.
>
> If it passes these hurdles, only France and Spain will still have a peacetime death penalty among West European nations.

Present British Law Widely "Disliked"

An earlier AP Report from London (Los Angeles *Times,* Nov. 9, 1964) explained why the present complicated law on the death penalty is so "widely disliked by both opponents and advocates of capital punishment":

> Since 1957 the death penalty for murder has been limited to what are called "capital" murders. They are not necessarily the most barbarous. They are those considered to strike especially at the maintenance of law and order. These are capital murders: Murder in the furtherance of theft; murder by shooting or causing an explosion; murder of a police officer, or someone helping him, acting in the execution of his duty; murder of a prison officer and murder to escape arrest.
>
> Stranglers, child-killers and sex-killers escape the gallows, and are usually given "life imprisonment." Life terms actually average 10 years.

Problems Arising from Abolition of Death Penalty

The *Manchester Guardian* (Dec. 24, 1964), commenting on the House of Commons vote, also notes the "incidents" reported above, and says: "These incidents have an emotional impact; but they have little bearing on the logic of the case." The *Guardian* then presents

a long-range view of some problems that will result from "abolition"; and, since we in California will sometime inevitably be confronted by a similar situation, the remarks are pertinent here:

> It is already time to look farther ahead. Many murderers are now serving sentences of imprisonment under the 1957 Act in lieu of execution. Others certainly will be, including some still liable to execution under the Act. If hanging is the wrong penalty for murder, is imprisonment the right one, and for how long? There are good grounds for thinking that a sentence of more than nine years or so produces a permanent deterioration in a human being, and it is a grave thought that a man who went into prison with a warped mind may emerge with a crippled one as well.
>
> The right answer surely is—going far beyond the confines of Mr. Silverman's Bill—that we ought to pay far more attention to the reformative aspects of prisons, even in (or perhaps especially in) the most serious cases, and not rely solely on the deterrent effect. There have been some marked improvements in recent years in the handling of ordinary prisoners. . . . But the whole conception of the prison as a therapeutic community (using sometimes drastic forms of therapy, but aiming always at a radical change in the prisoner) is something in which we have barely made a start.

In Western United States

Capital punishment is still an unresolved issue in the state of California. In a recent interview Gov. Edmund G. Brown made a strong appeal for abolition of the death penalty. He said that by February, 1965, California would have gone one year without any executions; that if the death penalty were a "deterrent," capital crimes *should* have increased during the past year, whereas the fact was that they had decreased. Gov. Brown made it clear that officially he would abide by the decision of the legislature, but that personally he would never stop opposing the death penalty. Members of the legislature will undoubtedly have to face this issue again during the current session.

Oregon outlawed capital punishment in November, 1964, according to the Los Angeles *Times* (Nov. 5).

"Does Hanging Kill the Man?"

A brief editorial in the *Psychic Observer* for February raises this question from the standpoints of orthodox Christian believers, spiritualists, and "occultists." Is it logical to suppose, from either a Catholic or Protestant viewpoint, that the church has simply lost its

control over the "vicious characters" of men who have been hanged; and is this not an undesirable eventuality? But the *Psychic Observer* explores the possibility that the personality or "soul" of the executed criminal will remain a maleficent influence until his basic motivations have been altered through education:

> What does the State really hang? A bundle of nerves that played a false game of life with the man whose name it bore. What then did the State kill? The scientist will tell us that the State destroyed a group of cells assembled together to obey the will of man until a stronger force scattered them. The hangman's rope, controlled by the law of man, was that stronger force.
>
> If the Theosophists are right in their delineations and reincarnation be true, are not the States and Countries whose laws demand a life for a life, contributing criminals for future generations? Would it not be far better to build schools than jails? Give enlightenment to youth and the hangman's rope will be unnecessary.

From the Other Side of Death

The editor of the *Psychic Observer* also suggests that execution, far from being a protection to society, may be precisely the reverse:

> Is it sane or sensible to continue a practice of which the outcome is unknown to men? If hanging does not kill the man, what protection does the church and government give the people from the hanged man? If the Occultists and Spiritualists are right and the hanged man is not killed, has not the government created a menace, rather than destroyed one? If the hanged man still lives, although robbed of his physical body, he must be in a conscious state of being or he could not be punished, be prayed for, saved or communicated with, after death. That part which is supposed to be killed when hanged, grimaces at the hangman, slips from the noose and walks away a free man. What then, has it availed the State to hang in effigy a body that does not contain the man?